inated to other parts of the Mediterranean where they enriched local traditions and practices.

The most important contribution of the book is that these masterpieces of specialized production are fully treated for the first time, not simply as artistic works or for their various functions, but because they represent a specialized technological innovation, transmitted by individuals from the island of Cyprus to much of the Mediterranean. This direct stimulation helped the development of the local, already existing traditions in these areas, such as Crete, in the later 13th through earlier 11th centuries B.C.

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***David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King*, by Baruch Halpern. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001. xx + 492 pp., 9 figures, 12 maps. Cloth. $30.00.**

It strains the reviewer's memory to recall a semipopular volume on ancient Israel with so interwoven a tapestry of erudition and irreverence as Baruch Halpern's new biography of the complicated King David. As Halpern triumphs in making hard-hitting scholarship look so effortless, his matter-of-fact exposition for a diversely informed readership ultimately succeeds as a work of serious history. The prose is also spectacularly funny—which must be a first for a work of this kind—and this helps to digest the bevy of complex and seemingly counterintuitive notions Halpern is wont to toss at the reader. One finds many of Halpern's gracefully executed conclusions so perfectly obvious as to neglect the fact that they fly in the face of much institutionalized Albrightean scholarship on the united monarchy generally and the reign of Israel's dynastic founder specifically.

Halpern's main concern is the extent to which the David narratives in the book of Samuel provide the modern historian with a reliably contemporary portrait of the events related. Samuel's numerous hints (explicit and implicit) of murder directed at David, coupled with its strenuous apologia intended to distance him from each crime, unfurl chronological red flags for Halpern. Drawing on the work of McCarter (1980), he maintains that the purported acts of murder and betrayal could not have originated in a later political milieu, when the obscurity of these acts would have carried little ideological resonance, had they survived in public memory at all. It appears unseemly, moreover, that any anachronistic political apologist should seek to legitimate a sitting dynasty by the labored invention of a treacherous founding dynast of suspect pedigree. This last observation strikes deep at critiques of narrative form and political motive ranging from Gunn's (1978) dehistoricized literary approach to Thompson's (1999) attempt to reposition the composition of Samuel within a Persian or Maccabean political agenda. For Halpern, the simplest explanation for Samuel's complementary innuendo and damage control requires a political setting in which there existed a perceived need to exonerate David from rumors of egregious and, more importantly, petty (hence forgettable) behavior. The compositional setting must therefore have been close in date to the events narrated.

The major concession of this work is, of course, Samuel's simultaneous acknowledgment and cover-up of David's contemptible behavior before and after his accession to kingship. Halpern brazenly brands David both a serial killer and ill-chosen dinner guest. He examines nine cases of murder in which David was explicitly, implicitly, or circumstantially culpable. In each case, he addresses the motives, means, and opportunities David might have had for orchestrating the assassinations. And backroom orchestration is truly the operative concept here: Halpern's main concern is not so much whether David was actually guilty in every case, but how the apology sculpts the narrative to argue that David was nowhere near the scene of the crime when it happened. In other words, the apology attributes each crime to the stained hands of a patsy or else, as in the case of Nabal, unfortunate coincidence. This narrative mechanism of political denial is most systematic, because it even addresses murders for which popular suspicion alone must have implicated David (e.g., the deaths of Saul and his sons). For Halpern, even the rebellions against David appear to have been contrivances set in motion as pretext to consolidate power and/or acquire territory. Concluding a chapter entitled "Absalom's Gift," he writes, "The Absalom revolt could not have turned out better if David had planned it. How he might have done so is obscure. But since he profited from it, one ought to wonder. Did David—and Joab—rehabilitate Absalom to be the rallying point of a planned 'popular' uprising? In other words, were they luring the army of Israel into a trap, only to crush them, centralize taxation, and build a modern state?" (pp. 380–81).

By no means is this Albright's David. Unlike his gilded portrayal in Chronicles, however, the thuggish David emerges as more historical and authentic under the thumb of Samuel's royal spin control, not the least because the latter text, according to Halpern, is full of lies. This thesis departs from the traditionally positive depiction of the figure of David and the origin of his lineal dynasty in Jerusalem. It further challenges whether recent "minimalist" charges of incongruity between the text's claims and the material record indeed undermine the historicity of Israel's united monarchy.

Halpern draws generic attention to the royal propaganda of Tiglath-pileser I, whose narrative inscriptions seem to exhibit liberal regard for the historical facts underpinning

them. Halpern sees this narratological device as characteristic of annalistic material designed to legitimate and lionize the august monarch, and further finds the device rampant throughout the text of Samuel. This has led to a certain magnification of David's accomplishments, notably his foreign conquests, which Halpern proceeds to dissect systematically. He deems the geographic swath of David's ambit to have been much smaller than is conventionally proposed by the scholarship of Aharoni, Glueck, and others. David's "conquests" abroad must likewise be treated with the same caution as the famed 28 crossings of the Euphrates made by Tiglath-pileser to subdue the recalcitrant Ahlamu Aramaeans. Halpern's "Tiglath-pileser principle" admits of gritty human inadequacies and historical banalities through the veil of aggrandizement: 28 excursions to subjugate overmatched brigands are hardly grounds for self-adulation. Such events appear magnified in the context of their reporting, but a critical reading of Samuel in its ideological *Sitz im Leben* leads the careful historian to an entirely different set of expectations than that of revisionists who find exaggeration tantamount to anachronistic fantasy (cf. Byrne 2002).

Observing parallelism between the organization of information in Assyrian royal display inscriptions and in 2 Samuel 8, Halpern concludes that the latter text was culled from a display inscription commissioned by David's court. This text concerns David's victories over the Philistines, Moabites, Aramaeans, Edomites, Ammonites, and Amalekites. The narrative offers no coherent chronology for these victories, but instead lumps them together in a fashion reminiscent to Halpern of Assyrian display texts. Some may find the ease with which Halpern blurs the line between Assyrian annalistic and summary documents somewhat disconcerting (cf. Tadmor 1994: 22–25), but this does not substantially affect his argument. What does impact his thesis, however, is its conjecture. This observation of organizational parallelism is intriguing, but it also raises the question of whether such propagandistic formulae must have originated in lapidary form. Absent an unearthed Davidic display, it is difficult to exclude the notion that this particular example of summary narrative is not native to the apology itself.

Despite the volume's strengths, there are some noticeable weaknesses in its organization and presentation. At least three previously published articles (Halpern 1996; 1997; 1998) reappear here in altered forms, and this lends the book's synthetic structure the uncomfortable appearance of having been forcibly assembled. Halpern has compiled an ambitious scholarly treatise attacking difficult cruxes and sacred cows alike with myriad novel and subversive proposals. Preempting the skimming reader, Halpern takes regular care to revisit past points in order to ensure that his audience is following his labyrinthine synthesis on any given point. Redundancies therefore abound throughout the already lengthy volume, but this is understandable in view of its scope and attempt to remain accessible. There are also regrettably fewer citations of prior scholarship than is customary on numerous contestable historical and textual matters. Halpern's efforts to coordinate the textual and archaeological data are laudatory (and in many cases convincing), but they can appear cavalier with respect to his historical assumptions about anonymous material culture. It is not clear, for example, how he knows that "reconstruction at Megiddo, starting in Stratum VB, clearly occurred under Jerusalem's direction" (p. 389) or that the Ekron V–III transition "suffered either at the hands of Gath during the Absalom revolt, or shortly after, at Siamun's" (p. 379). Blanket statements like these, and there are many, require better support if they seek wide approval.

Minor quibbles aside, Halpern has produced an extraordinarily fresh analysis of the Hebrew Bible's most eccentric and alluring personality. This is a pioneering tome, both in breadth and style, which will provoke, prod, and placate lay and scholarly readers alike. Few meaty books like this come along in a decade, and undoubtedly none funnier.

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***Tell Hesban and Vicinity in the Iron Age*, by Paul J. Ray, Jr. Hesban 6. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2001. xv + 270 pp., 68 figures, 37 plates, 7 tables. Cloth. $45.99.**

This reworked doctoral dissertation is the final publication of the Iron Age Strata 21–16 at Tell Hesban, excavated in five seasons between 1968 and 1976. The author cites three objectives for this work: identification of the Iron Age stratigraphy; reconstruction of the everyday life of the inhabitants of Iron Age Hesban and its vicinity; and an investigation of the role of the Heshbon Expedition in the development of archaeological methodology.

The book has a fairly straightforward format: introduction; evolution of methodology at Hesban; chronology; individual chapters on Hesban and vicinity in the Late Bronze, Iron I, Iron II, and Hellenistic periods; a conclusion; and locus, small find, and fauna lists. Although the Hesban pottery volume is still in preparation (to appear as Hesban 11, by the late James Sauer and Larry Herr), the present volume includes illustrations of stratigraphically significant sherds from each Iron Age stratum. The description of each stratum is presented as three idealized stages: construction, use, and destruction/abandonment. This ideal could not always be followed through, however, since the few stratified Iron Age layers had been largely removed by later occupations, leaving little or no evidence for some strata. Inevitably, the periodization of Hesban has been frequently amended over the years, and this final report presents the following scheme:

Stratum 21: LB/Iron I transition—Iron IA (ca. 1225–1150 B.C.)—Limited material from dump layers.
Stratum 20: Iron IA/B (ca. 1150–1100 B.C.)—Material from bedrock trench, possibly a dry moat. Strata 21 and 20 were not defined stratigraphically but on the basis that some of the pottery in 20 was apparently typologically later than that in 21; given the sparseness of the assemblage, I am not totally convinced that these can be safely designated as separate strata.
Stratum 19: Iron IB (ca. 1100–1050 B.C.)—Hardly any material.
Stratum 18: Iron IIA (ca. 1050–925 B.C.)—Dump layers, with the possibility that the Hesban reservoir should be attributed to this stratum rather than to 17.
Stratum 17: Iron IIB (ca. 925–700 B.C.)—Meager remains.
Stratum 16: Iron IIC/Persian (ca. 700–500/450 B.C.)—Various walls, and better preservation.

Methodologically, the Hesban excavations demonstrated an increasing interest in anthropological questions as a complement to the original concerns with history and the Bible. In a sense, with this volume the process has come full circle. The picture Paul Ray offers is an eclectic cocktail of anthropological interpretations set within LaBianca's food systems framework and tribal kingdoms model (LaBianca 1990; 1999), with a rather cavalier dash of old-style unreconstructed biblical archaeology. I use the word "cavalier" because Ray cites (early) biblical verses as historical documents with abandon, betraying no hint of caution in their use, no clues that he appreciates that the biblical text was subject to an editing process that must be interpreted and dated rather than accepted at face value.

Following a lack of evidence for Late Bronze Age occupation (some LB sherds were allegedly found, but most cannot now be located), despite some LB settlement in the vicinity, Ray suggests (after Herr), solely on the basis of ceramic parallels with Palestine, that Hesban in Iron I was a small, unfortified Reubenite village (thus "confirming" the passage in Num 32:37). He further appeals to the book of Judges for evidence that Stratum 20 may have been destroyed by Amalekites, Midianites, or Ammonites; proposes that the Stratum 18 reservoir was part of Solomon's public works, equating it with the "pools of Heshbon" in the Songs; and uncritically accepts the biblical division of districts, concluding that Stratum 18 was part of the "tribal kingdom" of Israel, providing agricultural products and animals for Solomon's table in Jerusalem. The historicity and dating of these texts is never questioned, and indeed whether Hesban can even be equated with biblical Heshbon remains an unresolved problem.

The Iron IIB Stratum 17 is described as a "Moabite squatter settlement," largely, it seems, because so few remains were found (and no architecture). The subsequent Iron IIC/Persian Stratum 16 yielded rather more, and its association with Attic pottery and inscribed ostraca suggests it was a prosperous small town involved in administrative activities. Taking a more regional view, Ray concludes that in Iron IIB there was a partial return to range-tied tribalism, while in the Iron IIC/Persian period, as the climate dried, land-tied agriculture returned under foreign vassalage, with investment in crops and planting, in particular wine production. One questions whether the lack of excavated remains of Stratum 17 is sufficient evidence for the broad conclusion that these were essentially pastoralist squatters. Hesban has suffered so much denudation from later—particularly Late Hellenistic and Roman—occupations that the cautionary phrase "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence" could have been fruitfully employed here. In any case, it is fast becoming an a priori truth that this environment throughout history *always* had a significant proportion of range-tied tribalism, in every period: